

Jessica Chanchalashvili  
[REDACTED]  
Great Neck, NY [REDACTED]

May 16, 2016

Honorable Colleen McMahon  
United States District Judge  
Southern District of New York  
United States Courthouse  
500 Pearl Street  
New York, New York 10007

Dear Judge McMahon,

My name is Jessica Chanchalashvili and I am Moshe Mirilashvili's granddaughter. I am finishing my junior year at Sarah Lawrence College and I am studying literature and writing.

Life without my grandfather is not only dim and incomplete, but it is completely dark and profoundly empty. My life brims with despair. The thin shades across my window swell with sadness every morning. The man whose mythology shaped my identity and whose essence molded my empathy is missing from my life, and I deeply need him.

My grandfather's voice can compete with the roar of the mountains; not in volume, but in strength. The cadence of his voice, with its gentle lulls and poetic wisdom, has been teaching me the importance of altruism for as long as I can remember. He uses his voice to express his compassion and communicate his love. He has an immense capacity for kindness, and that kindness is exercised in impossibly humble and quiet ways.

Growing up, I always had food on my table and a roof over my head. In light of this privilege, my grandfather still reminded me that not everyone in the world was as comfortable as I was. He incessantly told me that it was my responsibility to help others. Once, he said to me: "You must love and respect everyone. People who smell like perfume and people who smell like sweat. People who live down the street and people who live across the ocean." I have this quote transcribed in my phone and written in many notebooks. It propels me to be a better person. There is always a sense of urgency in him, as if it is his duty to cure everyone's suffering. I have inherited his sense of urgency, not by luck or genetics, but because of his powerful example.

My love for literature stems from my grandfather. When I was a child and had trouble falling asleep, he would come over and tell me vivid tales until I shut my eyes. When I was a teen and felt lonely, he gave me a long list of books to read. And now, in college, I will never put

down a book until I have an extensive conversation about it with my grandfather. He is the best person to exchange ideas with, and that is because he communicates his ideas with grace and gentleness. He is always open to my ideas and always encourages me to read more, write more, and think more.

He used to always tell me: "Jessie, your life will be complete once you read Tolstoy." And now, I swallow every syllable of Tolstoy my hungry eyes can, because Tolstoy connects me to the person who is so far away: my beloved grandfather. We share a favorite passage in War and Peace:

*Nikolai heard Natasha's ringing, causeless, happy laughter.*

*"You know," she suddenly said, "I know I'll never again be as happy and peaceful and I am now."*

*"That is nonsense, silliness, rubbish," said Nikolai.*

*"How lovely my Nikolai is!" thought Natasha.*

*"Ah! There's still light in the drawing room," Natasha said, pointing to the windows of the house, shining beautifully in the wet, velvet darkness of the night.*

My grandfather and I talked about Natasha a lot: her ringing laughter, and what it means to be happy and sad at the same time. With honesty and candor, my grandfather told me about how he felt both happy and sad when he first came to America. He is never afraid to be vulnerable and share personal stories with me. He is the only person in my life who has the patience to sit down and talk to me about life for hours. He will never trivialize my thoughts or minimize my concerns. He believes in me when I don't believe in myself, and that gives me the strength to keep going. We use literature as a bridge to talk about life. Like Natasha, I too believe that *there's still light in the drawing room*. In my drawing room, that light is Moshe.

As a child, I suffered from [REDACTED]. I may not remember the pain, but I do remember my grandfather sitting by my side and wiping my tears. Whether I had food poisoning or strep throat, my grandfather would always be there to make sure I was okay. Even as a young adult, I feel comfortable calling my grandfather at any time of the day when I feel ill. Last fall, he even drove to Bronxville 2 A.M. to pick me up from the campus library because I felt sick and scared. He is the only person who knows how to truly make me feel better.

I learned the importance of hard-work and ambition through my grandfather's example. When he tells me stories about his first years in America, he speaks with great dignity. What does life look like when you start from nothing? Life is comprised of menial jobs and late-night shifts.

But that did not matter to him. He embraced every challenge with zeal and approached every obstacle with vitality.

When I close my eyes, I see myself eating khachapuri, a classic Georgian food, with my grandfather. This dish is a staple in our diets, but his always tastes a little different than mine. While my khachapuri is seasoned with butter and pepper, his is seasoned with toil and ambition. While my khachapuri is served with a plate, his is served with the hands of hard-work.

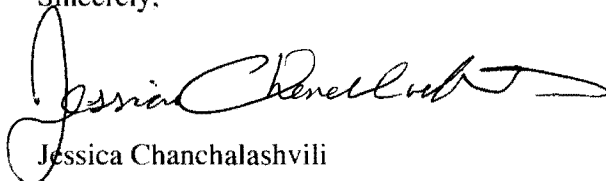
In the midst of his trial, he looked at me and said: "I am the richest guy alive. Money does not make a person rich. Family makes a person rich." I think this really captures my grandfather. He cares so deeply about his family, and dedicates every free moment of his life to us. I would not be the person I am today if it wasn't for our monthly trips to Manhattan, weekly visits, and daily phone-calls.

Your honor, it is nearly impossible to encapsulate the depth of my grandfather's character. His heart is boundless and his soul is lofty. There is a Georgian adage that my grandfather often says to me: "Everything I understand, I understand with love." My grandfather looks at the world through the lens of goodness. He always sees the best in people. It is a quality I try to emulate every single day. And it is a quality I look for in other people.

The backdrop of my grandfather's life— the dining room with its plates filled with Georgian food, the shelves overflowing with books, the framed photos of family members next to his bed— flutters around my eyelashes each morning. Everyday, I try to channel my grandfather. In class, I try to emulate his inquisitiveness. With friends, I try to replicate his kindness. With family, I try to echo his powerful voice.

My grandfather's incarceration has been very traumatic for my family. How can we stand when our strongest pillar is missing? Your honor, I hope that you see that my grandfather is irreplaceable. He is my best friend, my role-model, and the greatest person I have even known. I hope that you consider his incredible character when making your decision. I trust your compassion and wisdom. Thank you so much for taking the time to read my story.

Sincerely,



Jessica Chanchalashvili